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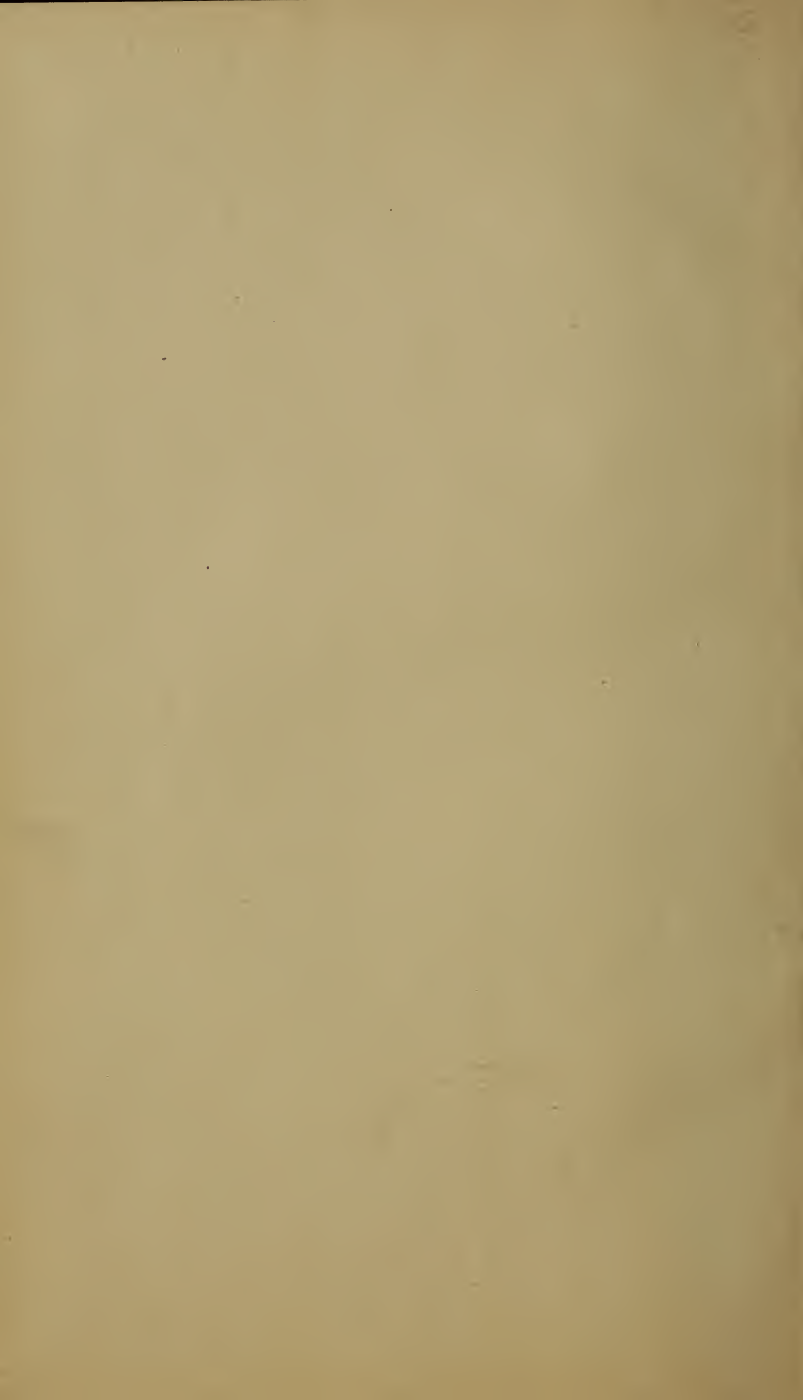


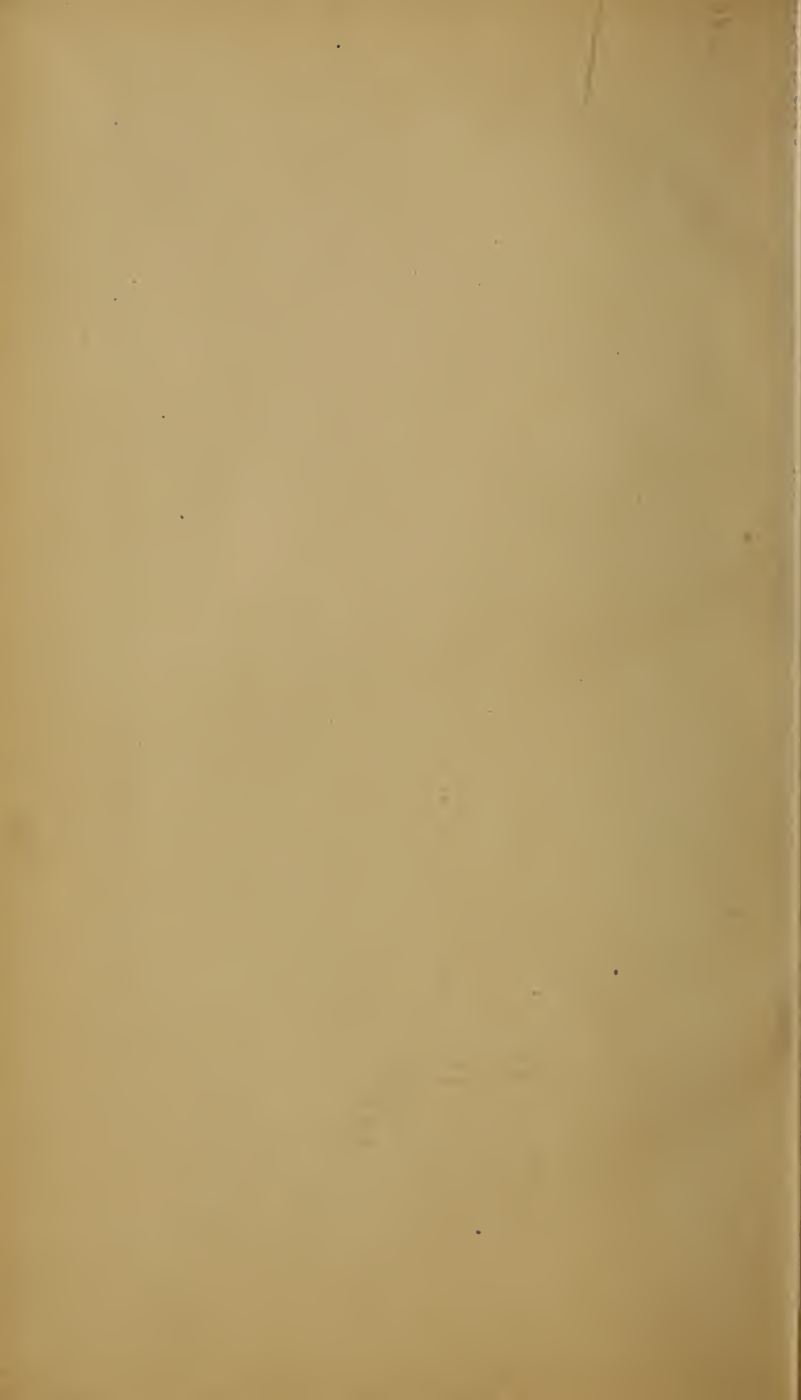
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IN HONOR OF

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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A MEETING OF THE INDIANA
STATE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
HELD IN TOMLINSON HALL IN
INDIANAPOLIS DECEMBER THE
TWENTY-EIGHTH NINETEEN
HUNDRED AND FIVE

*With a Brief Sketch of the Life
of*

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

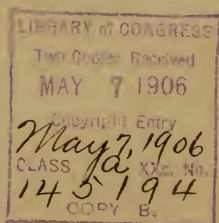
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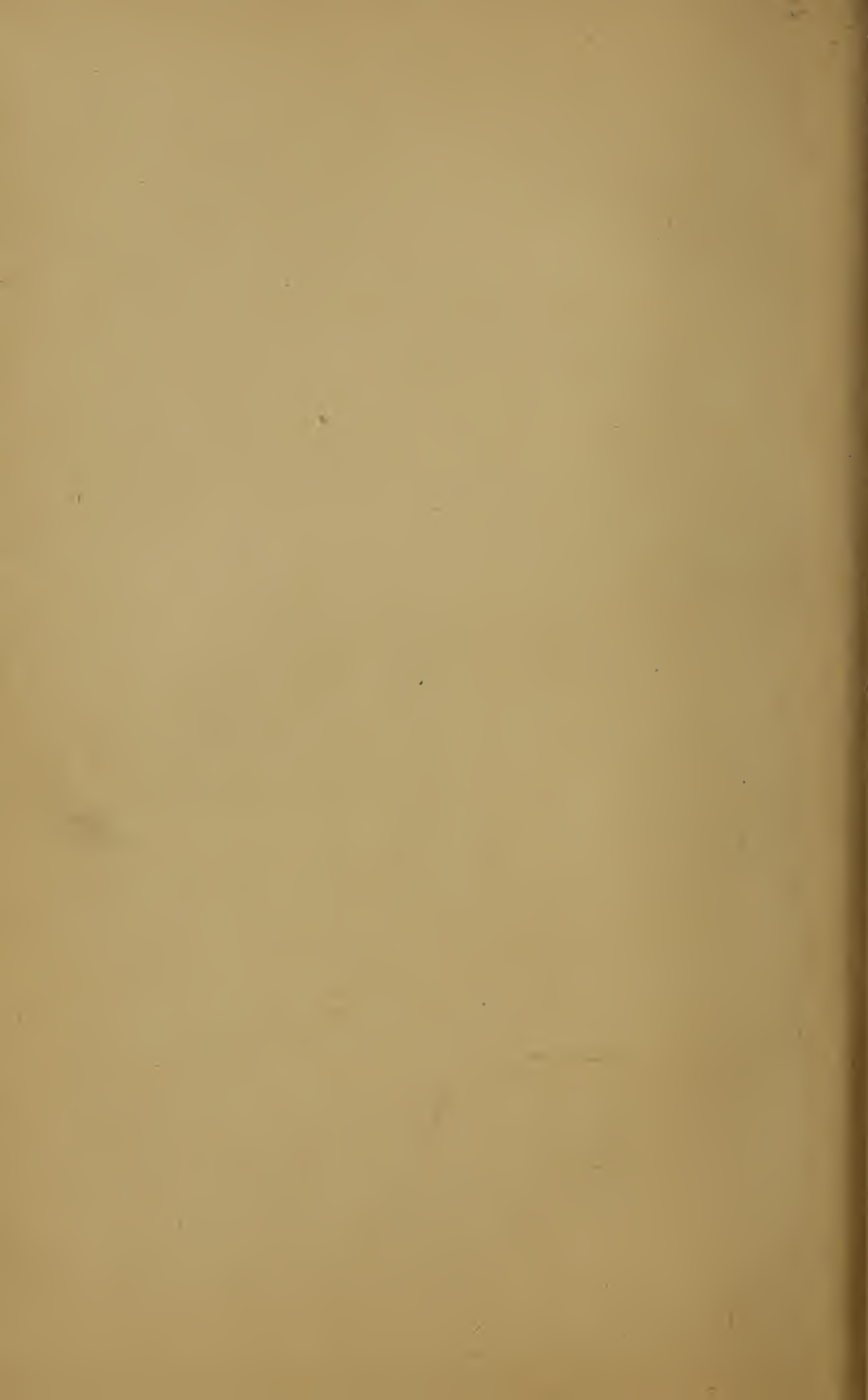
Published, April

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Grateful acknowledgment is made by the publishers to Edwin Holt Hughes, Albert J. Beveridge, Charles R. Williams, Meredith Nicholson and Henry Watterson for permission to reprint their addresses; to Mrs. Hugh McGibeny for the music used in her readings; and to James Whitcomb Riley for the text of his response to the greetings of the teachers and for his valuable suggestions.



EXPLANATORY PREFACE

Shortly after the election of the writer as President of the Indiana State Teachers' Association, he conferred with Mr. B. F. Moore, Superintendent of Schools at Marion, and Chairman of the Executive Committee, with reference to the programme to be presented at the meeting in December, 1905. We agreed that in some way Mr. James Whitcomb Riley should be brought before the teachers of the state. We well knew that our good poet could not be moved by ordinary considerations, and that we must appeal to him on high grounds if we would secure his presence at one of our gatherings. We felt that for long the teachers of Indiana had been familiar with Mr. Riley's poems, and that they would be helped by contact with the poet himself. We, therefore, urged Mr. Riley to allow us to plan some form of tribute at one of the sessions of the Association. He had misgivings: such a meeting among his close friends would be embarrassing; and such a meeting in honor of one living and present

EXPLANATORY PREFACE

might by some be deemed indelicate. We assured him that the inevitable self-consciousness and embarrassment would be worth while in view of the object and in connection with the genuineness of the tribute, and that the officers of the State Association would be careful to explain that his relation to the occasion had been won by our insistence and was represented only by a modest consent.

We then proceeded with our plans. It soon became plain that the meeting would take on large proportions. Great men, whose hours command vast honorariums, were glad to aid us without remuneration and for the love they bore Mr. Riley. The session was carried to Tomlinson Hall, with the conviction that even the immensity of that auditorium would not be sufficient to hold all who would eagerly join in tribute. The following programme and the printed addresses will show something of what that tribute was. But these pages can not fully reveal the mood of the meeting—the thought and feeling of four thousand people fused into unity. The gathering was unique and unparalleled. The hour was full of warmth and truth.

The gratitude of the Indiana State Teach-

EXPLANATORY PREFACE

ers' Association is due to those who participated in the exercises; it is especially due to Mr. Riley for permitting the educational forces of the state to be the auspices under which such a noteworthy and dignified tribute was conveyed to himself.

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES.

DePauw University,

January 1, 1906.

PROGRAMME

MUSIC—MANUAL TRAINING HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS—DR. EDWIN HOLT HUGHES,
President Indiana State Teachers' Association

ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN OF THE AFTERNOON—SENATOR
ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

MUSIC—Vocal Solo: "Onaway! Awake, Beloved"
(from Hiawatha Wedding Feast), *S. Coleridge
Taylor*—MR. ORVILLE HAROLD, Muncie

ADDRESS—MR. CHARLES R. WILLIAMS, editor Indian-
apolis *News*

MUSIC—Solo—MRS. THOMAS C. WHALLON, Indian-
apolis

ADDRESS—MR. MEREDITH NICHOLSON, Indianapolis

MUSICAL MONOLOGUE—(a) There, Little Girl, Don't
Cry; (b) Out to Old Aunt Mary's—MRS. HUGH
McGIBENY, Indianapolis

ADDRESS—HONORABLE HENRY WATTERSON, editor
Louisville Courier-Journal

MR. RILEY will be present and respond to the greet-
ings of the teachers



B. F. MOORE
CHAIRMAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS BY EDWIN HOLT HUGHES

*President of DePauw University and President of the
Indiana State Teachers' Association*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—Mr. Riley is frequently called upon to appear before celebrities. Last week he was with President Roosevelt; this week he is with the Indiana teachers. Judge for yourselves whether this is a climax. It is only proper for me to report that there is in this meeting but one unwilling guest. Musicians have canceled recitals and dismissed pupils that they themselves might add melody to eulogy. Senators have been glad to leave duties, and even political love-feasts, in order to be here. Authors have eagerly dropped their quills that they might in living presence pay tribute to their brother. Editors have abandoned the press of their work and will give other editors a chance to print what they have to say about a former newspaper man. And you who are not on this programme have counted yourselves fortunate to find room anywhere in this vast hall. And yet there is here one graciously unwilling

ADDRESS BY

guest; and that is Mr. Riley himself. In many years the Indiana State Teachers' Association has tried to give him public honor; it is the crowning achievement of the present administration that we have succeeded. By dint of earnest solicitation, of prose coaxings interspersed with poetic pleadings, we have at last secured his reluctant presence and have brought him hither as the modest center of this singular hour.

We may well say "singular", for it is to be doubted whether this gathering could have its like anywhere else in our broad land. In what other state could a poet be found to whom the educational forces would bring such honor as this? It only goes to show that Mr. Riley himself is a "Poem Here at Home,"—beloved even as his verse is beloved. The nearer you get to Lockerbie Street, the better he is loved, while those who enter the doors of his home fall under the spell of his heart and come out to see always thereafter the kindly face of the living poet upon the printed page.

We have long called James Whitcomb Riley "The Hoosier Poet," and we do not intend to surrender the title that signifies our loving ownership. He has his place in the *Library*



EDWIN HOLT HUGHES

of the World's Best Literature. If he had not had his place there, the agents could not have sold a single set anywhere from South Bend to Madison, or from Union City to Terre Haute! Indeed, no man can possibly succeed in Indiana who does not like Whitcomb Riley's poems! The pickets on our state lines halt every new-comer and demand the countersign. If he whispers "Riley," we let him in; if not, we deem him a hopeless alien and send him away because he has not the proper papers of Indiana naturalization.

But while we claim James Whitcomb Riley as ours by first discovery and by first love, we gladly recognize his power to enter sympathetically into the lives that are distant from his own both in experience and in geography. In truth, this is the wonderful power of our poet. We may well understand how the memory of his own youth could make him the greatest living poet of childhood. But how could a bachelor write *An Old Sweetheart of Mine*? How could a man, who never had a wife to be absent from him, write that poem which some of you have slipped into letters to your distant and delaying spouses, and which is entitled *When She Comes Home*?

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And how could one who had never known parental grief over the death of an only child write that sweet, low song of comfort called *Bereaved*? It is safe to say that much of the power of our friend's poetry lies in that strange, penetrating sympathy,—seen now in humor and now in pathos.

Plainly that quality foreordained that we could not always keep Whitcomb Riley within our borders alone. Glad as we are to claim him as ours in birth, in spirit and in love, we may well remind ourselves that the time is long passed when one state could claim him as its exclusive property. Therefore, we have invited here to-day a distinguished citizen of another state,—and, even though he lives only a few inches beyond the line, of another section,—to signify that our poet is now the nation's poet.

For, after all, we Indianians are not so extreme in our peculiarities that the things that reach us deeply are of no effect with folk in other parts. We are blessed with characteristics. We have no desire to be colorless. But we never cease to be "human bein's." Mr. Riley sometimes speaks in dialect; but he speaks, also, in such language of loving in-

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES

sight that the universal heart says: *How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?* Because he appeals to Indianians he appeals to men and women everywhere. Because he is The Hoosier Poet he is likewise The Human Poet. Since we have all felt the brotherhood of his verse, we are here to love him to his very face.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the name of the State Teachers' Association I greet you all. We have chosen our senior senator as the chairman of the afternoon and as our first speaker. It is my honor to introduce to you now the Honorable Albert J. Beveridge, whose right in this hour is based not alone on his own great ability, nor yet on his high office, but likewise on his warm friendship for James Whitcomb Riley.

ADDRESS BY
ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

United States Senator from Indiana

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN —
It would seem that Indiana and the Middle West, the center of the republic geographically, the center of the republic numerically, is becoming the center of the republic intellectually. Only in America could the center of culture follow close on the heels of the moving center of population; because only in America is learning equally distributed among the people, so that where the center of population is, the center of intelligence must be.

At any rate Indiana at this hour is giving more creative literature to the English-speaking world than any single portion of the republic. Charles Major, the American Du-mas; Meredith Nicholson, our latter-day Hawthorne; George Ade and Nesbit and McCutcheon, whose true humor sets the land aglee; Booth Tarkington, whose genius expresses itself in the most finished art of any contemporaneous novelist; David Graham Phillips, whose savage force and masterful-



ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

ness are elemental and epochal—all these and more are children of Indiana.

And dean of all, first of all and dearest of all is that American Burns, whom Indiana has given to the nation—James Whitcomb Riley. I say given by Indiana to the nation; for all that Indiana has and is belongs to the republic as a whole. And, besides, our joy and pride in this master singer of the people is too great to be provincial. Only the heart of the nation is great enough to share and hold it.

Dearer to the universal man than soldier, statesman or scholar are the world's poets; for the poet interprets the soul of man to itself and makes immortal the wisdom of the common mind. After all, the source of all poetry is in the hearts of the people. In the consciousness of the masses is that intelligence of the higher truths of the universe, of which this life is but a reflection; and it is this intelligence, uttered in words of music, that constitutes real poetry.

So he who knows not the people nor loves them can not sing that song to which their very natures are attuned. The aristocrat may make verses whose perfect art renders them immortal like Horace, or state high truths in

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austere beauty like Arnold. But only the brother of the common man can tell what the common heart longs for and feels, and only he lives in the understanding and affection of the millions. Only the man who is close to the earth and, therefore, close to the skies, knows the mysteries and beauties of both. Only he who is close to humanity is close to humanity's God.

That is why the true poet is so dear to the man in the furrow and the street—he listens and hears a voice of beauty singing the very thoughts his locked lips have not uttered and the yearnings that have filled him always. The poet is our soul's interpreter, voice of our spirit, evangel of our higher and our real life, utterer of the prophecy which God has planted in our breasts.

The poet of the people is a part of the people, and their better part; and that is why the people love him. That is why we love James Whitcomb Riley. He has understood us—understood us because he is of us; and, understanding us, has told us of ourselves, of our ideal selves, and therefore of our truly real selves. For only that is real in the soul of man which, to the mind of man, is ideal.

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

That is why the poet of the people becomes the poet universal. He gives that touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. Everybody knows Burns. His verse has gone into our common speech. We quote him without knowing it. Burns is human and says things we understand and things we need. Omar Khayyam's song of poise and resignation rises above the clattering footfalls of the centuries, and the modern world is listening to him now.

Riley is of this quality. He is the sentiment and wisdom of the universal common man, stated in terms of Americanism. There is something in him of Burns and something of the Tentmaker and a dash of Villon, and yet all Riley, all original, all born of our own home soil—every atom pure Indiana American.

What I like most in Riley is his sympathy with everybody and everything that needs or deserves it. The best things in Burns are his songs to a homeless mouse and a mountain daisy crushed beneath his plow. Riley is full of that same thing. He sympathizes with an old horse turned out to pasture.

Sympathy is the divinest faculty of man.

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It is a suggestion of Heaven. It sweetens misfortune and makes adversity smile. Toil turns to play beneath sympathy's touch, and the thorns of difficulty bear roses. There is nothing so fine as that friendliness of soul that knows and understands the sorrows, troubles, temptations, joys, hopes, aspirations and all the emotions of other souls.

Nothing is so splendid as to love things. These are qualities of the common people and the quiet homes. These qualities do not live in rich abodes—exclusiveness starves them. They are qualities growing out of the soil, and so out of the heart of God.

Take all your fine statements of high truths, but leave me the living speech of human sympathy. That is Riley's kind of speech. He is so full of it that it masters him and makes him write it out in poetry. That is how we have *Griggsby's Station* and *Nothin' to Say* and *The Old Band* and *Lockerbie Street*, and that very tenderest of all his lines expressing a new idea in literature—the sorrow of a childless one, who at heart and in longing and in loving capacity is a parent, for the real parent over the loss of a real child:

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

Let me come in where you sit weeping,—aye,
Let me, who have not any child to die,
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

We have these and a hundred others like them,
and thank God for them, and so thank God
for Jim Riley.

Riley is more the poet of the people than Burns was in this: he is the poet of the children. The plain people love children more than all things else. Only God and country are dearer to the common heart than the infant race growing up to take our place when, like old trees, we shall fall at last. Children are visible immortality. The beauty of youth is the loveliest thing in human life; and in the heart of childhood abides the future.

The common people know children and understand them; and so does Riley. Shelley's genius arranged brilliant words and amazing thoughts, but he never got as near to the human heart as the man who wrote *Fool Youngens* and *Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze* or *The Raggedy Man*. I would rather be the interpreter of childhood than to be the author of *Manfred*. What said the sa-

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cred Word—*Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Riley speaks our tongue. His words are the language of the people. He is the interpreter of the common heart. That is why he is so full of that sane fatalism called resignation—submission to the eternal forces of whom he would make friends, not enemies.

When God sorts out the weather and sends
rain,

W'y, rain's my choice,

—says Riley, echoing the man of the fields, who, like Riley, would a good deal rather be
“Knee Deep in June.”

But this voice of our ordinary American millions utters the depths of our soul and searches the heights of our faith when he tells of our trust in and reliance on the good God who, we know, with the wisdom of the heart, surely exists and surely cares for us. There are some of us who owe more personally to James Whitcomb Riley for that priceless thing—an unquestioning faith in God and Christ and immortality—than can well be put in words. The people who have not abandoned

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

that wisest of wisdoms, the wisdom of the heart, don't argue about or question these infinite truths. And Riley, the people's voice, asserts them. The poet does not syllogize about these eternal realities—the poet knows.

It is these people—these millions of common people—who pay the tribute of their love and admiration to James Whitcomb Riley to-day. For this meeting is held by the State Teachers' Association, and no body of men and women so truly represents the people as the teachers. Walking along a country lane in Germany one day, a German statesman said to me, pointing to a modest-appearing man, "There goes the German people—there walks the soul of the German nation."

And in answer to my look of inquiry he said:

"That is a typical German teacher; he is the bulwark of the fatherland."

This is truer of the American republic than of the German empire. A republican form of government rests on the citizen, and the teacher ought to be and is the maker of the citizen. So the teacher is the truest representative of the people; and thus it is that when the teachers of Indiana greet James

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

Whitcomb Riley, the people greet their poet.
"May he live long and prosper," and his true
song be sung for many a year to come, and its
music echo for ever in the souls of the people!

ADDRESS BY
CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

Editor of the Indianapolis News

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN —
“Weak-winged is song,” says Lowell, pre-
luding his great *Commemoration Ode*, which
proved his words untrue. He was thinking
for the moment how much better it is to have
actual part in a glorious action than to stand
by recording or applauding; thinking

’Tis so much less easy to do than to sing;

thinking that

Those who come
With ears attuned to strenuous trump and
drum,
And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,

must look with a sort of contempt on the
maker of rhymes who should seek to celebrate
their valiant deeds. Ah! but that was only a
passing mood. Self-depreciation yields to
truer conception of the poet’s part and art:

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Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,
A gracious memory to buoy up and save
From Lethe's dreamless ooze, the common grave
Of the unventurous throng.

"Weak-winged is song"? No, no; strong of
wing, unwearying of flight! There are no
men so much alive as the masters of song;
there is nothing the human mind creates so
enduring as poetry.

The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of
scorn,
The love of love.

He saw through life and death, through good
and ill,
He saw through his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,
Before him lay.

What matter if in the *Partition of the
Earth*, as Schiller sings, the poet is over-
looked, as

With dreamful eyes
His spirit lies
Under the walls of Paradise,



CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

while in silent rapture he catches a vision of the divine countenance, or listens in ecstasy to Heaven's seraphic harmony?

Alas, said Jove, the world away is given,
The land, the chase, and trade no more are
mine.
But if with me thou wouldst abide in Heaven,
Come when thou wilt, and welcome shall be
thine.

In "the land east of the sun and west of the moon," the poet has large demesnes. "The light that never was on land or sea" shines unfaltering in his eyes. With such an inheritance, what wonder the aged Goethe, thinking of his youth, could declare:

Nothing I had, and yet enough?

Dynasties may fall, hierarchies may yield place, science and philosophy may wither, art and architecture may be despised, civilization itself may decay and perish, but poetry remains—with power to quicken and to sweeten life. Greece is a memory. But Homer and Æschylus and Sophocles still lord it over the minds of men. Roman civilization passed

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away in corruption and debauchery. But Lucretius and Vergil and Horace still delight and instruct the world. Of all the men that played the leading parts upon the world's stage in the middle ages—popes or emperors, warriors or law-givers, Guelphs or Ghibellines—how brave soe'er a show they made, how large soe'er the power and prestige they enjoyed, what one of them all left so great and persistent an influence in the world; what one of them all is so much alive to-day, as that poet who, banished from his beloved Florence, made spiritual pilgrimage with Beatrice into the after life?

One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

Did you ever think that in a very true sense we estimate peoples and nations by their poets? Never does a race or a country seem quite to have come to its majority till it can count a true poet to its credit. Even a country otherwise insignificant we think of with a certain respect if it can boast a poet of more than local appeal. Witness poor little Portugal, to which Camoens lends luster and distinction. And when the true poet does come

CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

to a people, how much ampler and fuller life grows to be! Does not every Scotsman step firmer and breathe deeper because of Scott and Burns? Do not all

Who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals
hold
Which Milton held,

have high and worthy pride of lineage and race because Shakespeare and Milton delivered their message to the world in English speech? And do not all Americans count among the most precious accomplishments of the American mind the poems of Lowell and Longfellow, of Whittier, Whitman and Bryant?

Life in its elemental qualities is much the same under all skies, but there is infinite variety and modification in its manifestation. It is the poet who penetrates the outer and obvious rind, which alone is visible to most of us, into the inner and hidden core of things; it is the poet, with his spiritual vision, that in the transitory and particular discovers the kernel of eternal and universal truth and reveals it to our purblind but astonished appre-

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hension; it is the poet that beholds in the commonplace life of commonplace people that touch of divine significance which makes the lowliest kin to the highest, who discovers anew to a doubting and scoffing generation that "every human heart is human."

Matthew Arnold never tired of insisting that poetry is the criticism of life. By that he meant profound insight into the true meaning of life, the interpretation of life, the voicing of its deeper and deepest significance, the expression of what we all in moments of spiritual exaltation, or

When the ploughshare of deeper passion
Tears down to our primitive rock,

dimly or vaguely feel and strive in vain to
find utterance for. We moil and toil and
struggle on, busy with many concerns.

Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours.

But all the time we are conscious that life
is more than meat and raiment; that we are
not making the most and the best of ourselves
and what life offers.

CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

But often in the world's most crowded streets,
But often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

Then our poet comes; he takes us up to the mount of vision; life is transfigured before our eyes, and we, in worshipful gratitude, would fain build a tabernacle to the godlike power that he has exercised upon our souls!

And unto us of Indiana a poet has been born, who can enter the company of the world's true singers with confidence of gracious welcome and grateful acclaim. The fame and the wholesome cheer of Riley's minstrelsy have been blown about the world. The name of Indiana is spoken everywhere with larger respect, because he has haloed it with song. But more to us even than the wide repute our poet has given to our commonwealth is the fact that he has revealed us to ourselves. Indiana did not seem a promising abode for the muses, any more than Holland with its dykes and dunes and level reaches would seem to invite the landscape artist. But when the true artist came he saw the picturesque in every field and village and stretch of

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wave-washed beach. And when the poet came to

Love the brown earth where we are,

he found in the lives and hearts of our Indiana people, wherever he looked or listened, unheralded and unsuspected sources of song. We know ourselves better because of Riley; we know our neighbors better; we have truer sympathy with the great mass of our fellow citizens, because with loving, poetic insight and passion, he has revealed the mysteries of their hearts to us; and he has opened our eyes to see beauties and glories in our Indiana life, which, except for him, we might never have guessed were there.

The teachers of the state do well to honor him who has been the teacher of us all. They will do well if in all their teaching they strive to instil in their pupils the poet's penetration into the poetry of our common life and win them to the poet's serene and hopeful outlook.

Oh! let us fill our hearts up with the glory of
the day,
And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow
fur away!

CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

Whatever be our station, with Providence fer
 guide,
Sich fine circumstances ort to make us satis-
 fied;
Fer the world is full of roses, and the roses
 full of dew,
And the dew is full of heavenly love that
 drips fer me and you.

ADDRESS BY
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—
We are engaged to-day in the agreeable business of saying to a man's face what we have for many years been saying behind his back. The occasion is unique. It is not a birthday celebration, not a martyr's day, nor a saint's festival. It is just Riley's day.

A poet's history is deep-written in his work. He can not be older than his latest and blith-est lyric; and his environment, his education, his ideals, are all reflected in his own verse, so that he who runs may read. It is idle to seek the man behind the song where every line expresses his own experience, testifies to his own faith, and is a prayer born of his own confident hope. The poems of Riley form our great Hoosier Iliad; but more than that, they are the continuing story of his own loyal, gentle and trustful heart.

In his youth our young Æneas knew many cities, but mainly those of his own state. Like Thoreau, he traveled much, but chiefly on the nearest pike. His Roman highway was the



MEREDITH NICHOLSON

old National Road; and as a result of this close contact with rural and village life, it is safe to say that no other people in this diverse nation of ours have ever been studied by any observer of life with so shrewd or sympathetic eyes. Bret Harte left California almost with his first success; and Mark Twain carried *Huckleberry Finn* to strange New England airs.

But our young Æneas, cruising among Indian cities, through those years of unconscious preparation, seeing everything, hearing the gossip of the county in the village market-places, gathered a great store of knowledge, not down in the books, that was to take form a little later and become our truest history, whether set forth in literary English or in the pungent and illuminating vernacular now so rapidly disappearing.

He sought no high and strenuous key
To mark his new blithe minstrelsy,
Invoked no shrine on bended knee
In Greece or Rome,
But, all ungyved, his spirit free
Sang most of home!

His writings are not mere foot-notes to history, but important chapters of the text which

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students of the future must know if they would really appreciate our rise and growth. Out of the ashes of pioneer camp-fires rose the state, and our early years were darkened by danger, pestilence and famine. *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* represented Indiana in her darkest years; but we have reached a point from which we may turn and peer amiably into the pit from which we came. And there could be no grander tribute to the potency of the yeast of democracy than that to-day, after fifty years of striving, this great company of educators pays tribute to an American man of letters, a product of Indiana common schools.

And to a particular Hoosier schoolmaster I beg to offer tribute of special gratitude. Himself a poet, he pointed the boy Riley to the shining portals of the gates of song. Honor, all honor and glory to a citizen, a soldier, a teacher of Hancock County, Captain Lee O. Harris, of Greenfield!

Riley's advent was happily timed for the late twilight of our elder poets, when song had grown tame. His achievements loom large when we consider that the New England poets had back of them the riches of colonial his-

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

tory and tradition, and in Longfellow's case the loud-sounding cadence of the sea. Riley caught the Hoosier type afield, between the district school and the village store, and set down his traits indelibly—his rugged adherence to the soil; his essential domesticity; his simple, devoted patriotism; his unquestioning faith in the providence of God. The Hoosier whom Riley knew and studied is established for ever in the world's portrait gallery.

It was the poet's good fortune to witness the return of the Hoosier phalanx from our mightiest war, and with characteristic sympathy and insight he has repeatedly sung of our soldiers in many moods and keys. He has knit the Hoosier into communion with the peoples celebrated in all literatures—back through Whittier and Longfellow to Burns and beyond Chaucer further still to Meleager and Theocritus—down all this apostolic line of melodists Indiana salutes Greece and her storied isles.

It is not age, but it is truth that makes a classic. The Hoosier soldier in *Good-bye, Jim*, had not Achilles' shield, but under his blue coat he had Achilles' heart; and Fessler's bees are from the same hive as those that

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hummed above Hymmetus honey. The homely flowers of our Hoosier dooryard, like the joys and sorrows of the Hoosier heart, have now their classic place because our friend and comrade sings of them.

We are not here to discuss matters of literary workmanship, but one or two points we may heed. Charm, grace and melody are Riley's obvious characteristics as an artist. His feeling for the inevitable word—the word that alone expresses his sense and feeling—this and an unerring sensibility to form, stamped him early as one born to the singing robes.

But even more important, because so rare, is his unerring dramatic instinct. Many of his poems—those indeed that we know best, are in effect little dramas, perfect in setting and atmosphere, wherein the characters he has so abundantly discovered or created are endowed with life and are as veritable as though we met and talked with them. Examples of his felicity in this particular crowd upon us—such perfect and vivid characterizations as *Little Orphant Annie*, *Good-bye, Jim*, and *Nothin' to Say*. Few lyrical poems in our literature are capable of awakening the

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same emotions, touching the same chords, as this last. There is crowded into its lines a gentleness, a simple and deep affection, with so much color, a dialogue so apt and a climax so moving, that we are left rapt and wondering, as at the end of a beautiful drama.

Our friend affords a rare instance of the natural and intuitive scholar. He became, without the act of any university but by the investiture of the American people, a doctor of humane letters; and it is pleasant to think of him as indeed wise in the heart's affairs, with a physician's patient ear for man's grief and doubt, and a balm of song for world-sick souls.

And in this connection and before this company it is gratifying to recall that our friend's academic honors have not been meager. A graduate in course of no college, he is a Master of Arts of Yale University; a Doctor of Letters of Wabash College; a Doctor of Letters of the University of Pennsylvania, —verily, a prophet honored in his own time and in his own state and by representative institutions of learning of the United States!

In paying this tribute of regard and affection we must not forget one fact essential to

ADDRESS BY

any fair understanding of what Riley has done for us: he has never satirized us—never ridiculed us. His humor is of that finer kind that seeks for truth and is tempered with kindness and justice. It has long been remarked of the literature of lowly life that there is heartache beneath its gaiety and tears follow close upon its laughter.

Bagehot remarks that throughout Shakespeare's writings "we see an amazing sympathy with common people"; and Riley has sung unbrokenly of lowly and humble men of heart. He has stood for that continued idealization of the home which is the security and hope of the republic.

We can not pass lightly, if we would, this matter of our great debt to him. No honor we may bestow is commensurate with the distinction he has brought to us. He is the chief American poet of his generation, and only yesterday an English woman of letters remarked in this city upon his wide acceptance and popularity in England. And, best of all, he has made it a good and fine thing to be born a Hoosier.

We are not here so much to praise him as to congratulate ourselves. He rode into the

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

lists against those to whom Indiana was a byword and a hissing; he accepted their challenge, and we salute him to-day as our victorious champion. He is the poet laureate of American democracy, for democracy, let us say, is only the crystallized faith of man in man. His poems express the sane and reasonable conscience of the American people. He deals in eternal types, as Chaucer did. He has brightened the path of duty and brought the goal of honor near. He is a great teacher in the labor house of the brotherhood of man. He has touched old and neglected virtues with new life and light. Into his songs he has wrought the golden rosary of the beatitudes.

And so it is with gratitude that we greet him and praise him and crown him anew with our love.

SELECTIONS READ BY
MRS. HUGH MCGIBENY

- (a) THERE! LITTLE GIRL; DON'T CRY
- (b) OUT TO OLD AUNT MARY'S

SELECTIONS READ BY

There Little Girl, Don't Cry

CLARENCE FORSYTH.

Andante.

Recitativo.

mp

There! lit-tle girl, don't cry! They have
bro-ken your doll, I know, And your tea-set blue, And your play-house, too, Are
things of the long a - go, But child-ish trou-bles will
soon pass by— There! lit-tle girl, don't cry!

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MRS. HUGH McGIBENY

There! little girl; don't cry!
They have broken your slate, I know;
And the glad, wild ways
Of your school-girl days
Are things of the long ago;
But life and love will soon come by.—
There! little girl; don't cry!

There! little girl; don't cry!
They have broken your heart, I know;
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But heaven holds all for which you sigh.—
There! little girl; don't cry!

SELECTIONS READ BY

Out to Old Aunt Mary's

PIANO. *Moderato.*

The piano introduction is in G major, 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts on G4, moving stepwise to A4, B4, and C5. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment: G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2. The piece concludes with a final chord of G major (G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2).

Wasn't it pleasant, O brother mine, In those old days of the lost sunshine, Of youth, when the Saturday's shores were through,

p espressivo.

The vocal melody for the first line of lyrics is in G major, 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts on G4, moving stepwise to A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment is a steady eighth-note accompaniment: G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2. The piece concludes with a final chord of G major (G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2).

And the "Sunday's Wood" In the kitchen, too. And we went visiting, Out to Old Aunt Mary's "me and you." It all comes back so clear to-day.

The vocal melody for the second line of lyrics is in G major, 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts on G4, moving stepwise to A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment is a steady eighth-note accompaniment: G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2. The piece concludes with a final chord of G major (G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2).

Though I am as bald as you are gray— Out by the barn-door we patter alone, As light as the tips of Out to Old Aunt Mary's and down the lane, to the dust again, the drops of the rain.

The vocal melody for the third line of lyrics is in G major, 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts on G4, moving stepwise to A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment is a steady eighth-note accompaniment: G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2. The piece concludes with a final chord of G major (G2, B1, D2, F#2, G2, B1, D2, F#2).

MRS. HUGH MCGIBENY

We cross the pasture, and through the wood
Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood,
Where the hammering "red-heads" hopped
awry,

And the buzzard "raised" in the "clearing" sky
And lolled and circled, as we went by
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And then in the dust of the road again;
And the teams we met, and the countrymen;
And the long highway, with sunshine spread
As thick as butter on country bread,
Our cares behind, and our hearts ahead
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Why, I see her now in the open door,
Where the little gourds grew up the sides and
o'er
The clapboard roof!—And her face—ah, me!
Wasn't it good for a boy to see—
And wasn't it good for a boy to be
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?

The jelly—the jam and the marmalade,
And the cherry and quince "preserves" she
made!
And the sweet-sour pickles of peach and pear,
With cinnamon in 'em, and all things rare!—
And the more we ate was the more to spare,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

MRS. HUGH McGIBENY

And the old spring-house in the cool green
gloom

Of the willow-trees,—and the cooler room
Where the swinging-shelves and the crocks
were kept—

Where the cream in a golden languor slept
While the waters gurgled and laughed and
wept—

Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And O my brother, so far away,
This is to tell you she waits *to-day*
To welcome us:—Aunt Mary fell
Asleep this morning, whispering—"Tell
The boys to come!" And all is well

Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

ADDRESS BY HENRY WATTERSON

Editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—
Surely this must be “the Riley we’ve heard of so highly.” Else, what are we here for? Wherefore else the songs and the garlands, the rhythm of soul and voice, the music of a summer sea of heart-waves, mocking at winter as they bear the poet’s shallop from the Isle of Dreams, where he makes his abode, to this Palace of Enchantment, where he holds his court?

It is good to be here, to snuggle in the farthest corner—the biggest along with the littlest—because here at least there’s naught but sunshine; the frost that’s on the pumpkin is outside; why, even the “gobble-uns” have hied up the chimney and taken themselves off to never-never-never-land! And, it is a good time to be here; the radiance of the blessed Christmastide about us, the heels of old Santa Claus yet in sight as he trips into his empty

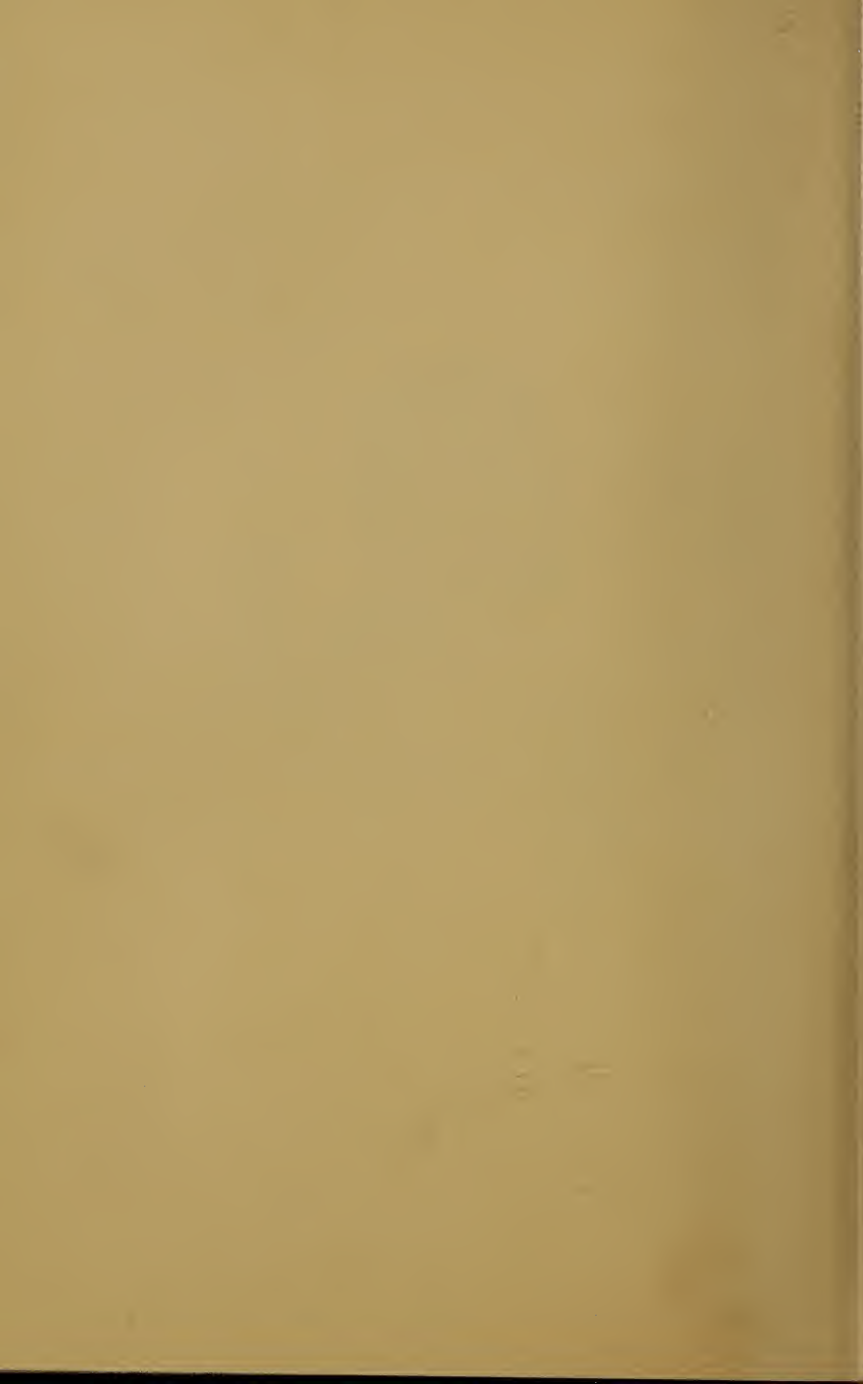
ADDRESS BY

sleigh and jingles through the air—Riley, himself, translated and gone where the good poets go! Truly, he is a good poet! Away back yonder—just after he had printed his first volume—a yard-master of one of the railways, who had known him as the artist that had marked and numbered the box-cars—even then an embryo man of letters—said proudly of him, “Riley, sir? Jim Riley, sir? Why, sir, do you know that Jim Riley’s got to be one o’ the best poets in Hancock County, sir?”

We will all subscribe to that; though, somehow, Hancock County has widened and broadened and deepened into the Universe, and he that was called the Hoosier poet—bursting the bands of mere geographic limitation—stands at length with the immortals of the whole creation!

But the other day a famous company in New York celebrated the seventieth birthday of the most famous of our prose-writers, as we are here celebrating the noontide of our great and honored poet, our neighbor and our friend; and, though I have fought throughout my life against sectionalism in all its forms, I can not repress a kind of sneaking satisfac-





HENRY WATTERSON

tion in the thought that the East, having exhausted its supply, has had to come West for a fresh crop of poets and humorists and novelists—finding most of them, by the way, in Indiana—even Howells in Ohio—and the satisfaction rises into exultation when I reflect that the standards of the literature of my country, thus following the star of empire, are held by hands so stalwart as those of Mark Twain and William Dean Howells and James Whitcomb Riley, with the Tarkingtons, the Majors, the Nicholsons, the Dunnes and the Ades to bring up the supports and take their places when they are gone.

But we are not here to make literary criticisms—just to love Riley, and one another—friends and brothers—and sisters, too—though maybe I had better not dwell on that point. “Ah, Tam, ah, Tam, it ga’s mee greet”—at least that line of your illustrious progenitor can not be applied to you—more’s the pity—more’s the pity! And yet in a way, Riley has made his peace with the women through the children. Or is it that each woman wants her poet all to herself, and that as long as he remains unmarried she can claim him for her

ADDRESS BY

own and he is hers? We have no record that Horace had a wife, nor Beranger, and perhaps poor Burns had been better without; so that there does seem a fitness that the apostolic succession of these in laying the final hand upon Riley, should find him celibate. Anyhow, as the good Rip observes, "we won't count that." The goddess of song is the poet's bride; and when I recall and try to classify this poet's brood, I stand aghast, nor wonder that he laid so many of them at the door of "Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone."

I rejoice with you in the name and fame of James Whitcomb Riley; but, within myself, I rejoice yet more in his personality. Like the poets of old, he looked into his heart and wrote, and what thirst-quenching drafts has he not brought up from that unfailing well: barefoot lays of the forest and the farm; the bygone time and the "sermons" of nature, "made out o' truck 'at's jes' going to waste," smiling godspeed on the plow and the furrow and the seed, as on man in his need—Somepin' with live-stock in it, and out-doors, And old crick-bottoms, snags, and sycamores.

That is Riley, God bless him! and all his troop of loved ones, from The Raggedy Man

HENRY WATTERSON

to Little Orphant Annie, as God be thanked
that his genius gave them shelter—that, in
this our poet laureate, Thought grew tired of
wandering o'er the world and home-bound
Fancy ran her bark ashore.

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—
In a very humble life you have made a most distinctive and memorable day, and I feel in the acceptance of your great consideration that the tribute is mine only as I stand as a simple representative of my own Hoosier people here at home. To the distinguished orators who have, through their high gifts, so greatly honored Indiana and her citizenship, is due our mutual gratitude, since they speak for us out of many diverse and exalted stations of life and public service. Indeed, it seems that from all points of the compass are contributed to this event these gifted tongues of eloquence, and to these our thanks are due: to the statesman and orator; to the scholastic master and reverend; to the poet and romancer; to the notable academic author-editor, and to that great voice and spirit of our country of to-day, Henry Watterson, loved and honored here as in the hearts of America at large—to all these, as has been demonstrated by this vast and brilliant audience, we are mutually beholden.

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

As to the teachers and the schools of Indiana, for this combined expression of favor, what can I say but most simply confess my especial thanks to them, a debt embracing all the space of life between my earliest youth and the present moment—from my first teacher to my last. And of these, two out of the long list of like benefactors, I may be excused for personally referring to at this time.

The first of them was a little, old, rosy, roly-poly woman—looking as though she might have just come rolling out of a fairy story, so lovable she was and so jolly and so amiable. Her school was kept in her little old Dame Trot sort of dwelling of three rooms, and—like a bracket on the wall—a little porch in the rear, which was part of the playground of her “scholars,”—for in those days pupils were called “scholars” very affectionately by their teacher; and her very youthful school was composed of possibly twelve or fifteen boys and girls. I remember particularly the lame boy, who always got the first ride in the swing in the locust tree during “recess.”

This first teacher was a mother, too, to all

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

of her "scholars," and in every particular her care was notable, especially at the drowsiness of certain little ones. They were often carried to an inner room—a sitting-room—where many times I was taken with a pair of little chaps and laid to slumber on a little made-down pallet on the floor. She would oftentimes take three or four of us together; and I can recall how a playmate and I, having been admonished into silence, grew deeply interested in looking at a spare old man sitting always by the window, which had its shade drawn down. After a while we became accustomed to the idea, and when our awe had subsided we used to sit in a little sewing-chair and laugh and talk in whispers and give imitations of the little old pendulating blind man at the window. Well, the old man was the gentle woman's charge, and for this reason, possibly, her life had become an heroic one, caring for this old husband of hers, who, blind and helpless, lived perfectly content, waiting always at the window for his sight to come back to him—for his vision to be restored—as it doubtless is to-day, as he sits at another casement and sees not only his earthly friends, but all the friends of the

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

Eternal Home, with the smiling, loyal, loving little woman for ever at his side.

The last teacher I remember, with an affection no less fervent, though of a maturer kind, was,—and is,—a man of many gifts, a profound lover of literature and a modest producer in story and in song, in history, and even in romance and drama, although his life-effort was given first of all to education. Most happily living to-day and hale and vigorous, he has but very recently retired from high and honorable office in my native county. To him I owe possibly the first gratitude of my heart and soul, since, after a brief warfare, upon our first acquaintance as teacher and pupil, he informed me gently but firmly that since I was so persistent in secretly reading novels during school hours he would insist upon his right to choose the novels I should read, whereupon the “Beadle” and “Munro” dime novels were discarded for such genuine masterpieces of fiction as those of Washington Irving, Cooper, Dickens, Thackeray and Scott; so that it may be virtually recorded that the first study of literature in a Hoosier country school was (perhaps very consciously) introduced by my first of liter-

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

ary friends and inspirers, Captain Lee O. Harris, of Greenfield.

Again expressing my profound thanks to all, I turn to such selections of homely Hoosier verse as have been asked for by the committee in charge of our programme.

THE NAME OF OLD GLORY

1898

When, why, and by whom, was our flag, the Stars and Stripes, first called "Old Glory"?—*Daily Query to Press.*

I

Old Glory! say, who,
By the ships and the crew,
And the long, blended ranks of the gray and the
blue,—
Who gave you, Old Glory, the name that you
bear
With such pride everywhere
As you cast yourself free to the rapturous air
And leap out full-length, as we're wanting you
to?—
Who gave you that name, with the ring of the
same,
And the honor and fame so becoming to you?—
Your stripes stroked in ripples of white and of
red,
With your stars at their glittering best over-
head—
By day or by night
Their delightfulest light

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

Laughing down from their little square heaven
of blue!—

Who gave you the name of Old Glory?—say,
who—

Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

*The old banner lifted, and faltering then
In vague lips and whispers fell silent again.*

II

Old Glory,—speak out!—we are asking about
How you happened to “favor” a name, so to say,
That sounds so familiar and careless and gay
As we cheer it and shout in our wild breezy
way—

We—the *crowd*, every man of us, calling you
that—

We—Tom, Dick and Harry—each swinging his
hat

And hurrahing “Old Glory!” like you were our
kin,

When—*Lord!*—we all know we’re as common
as sin!

And yet it just seems like you *humor* us all
And waft us your thanks, as we hail you and
fall

Into line, with you over us, waving us on
Where our glorified, sanctified betters have
gone.—

And this is the reason we’re wanting to know—
(And we’re wanting it *so!*—

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

Where our own fathers went we are willing to
go.)—

Who gave you the name of Old Glory—O-ho!—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

*The old flag unfurled with a billowy thrill
For an instant, then wistfully sighed and was
still.*

III

Old Glory: the story we're wanting to hear
Is what the plain facts of your christening
were,—

For your name—just to hear it,
Repeat it, and cheer it, 's a tang to the spirit
As salt as a tear;—
And seeing you fly, and the boys marching by,
There's a shout in the throat and a blur in the
eye

And an aching to live for you always—or die,
If, dying, we still keep you waving on high.
And so, by our love
For you, floating above,
And the scars of all wars and the sorrows
thereof,

Who gave you the name of Old Glory, and why
Are we thrilled at the name of Old Glory?

*Then the old banner leaped, like a sail in the
blast,
And fluttered an audible answer at last.—*

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

IV

And it spake, with a shake of the voice, and it
said:

By the driven snow-white and the living blood-
red

Of my bars, and their heaven of stars over-
head—

By the symbol conjoined of them all, skyward
cast,

As I float from the steeple, or flap at the mast,
Or droop o'er the sod where the long grasses
nod,—

My name is as old as the glory of God.

. . . . So I came by the name of Old Glory.

LITTLE ORPHANT ANNIE

Little Orphant Annie's come to our house to
stay,

An' wash the cups an' saucers up, an' brush the
crumbs away,

An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the
hearth, an' sweep,

An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn
her board-an'-keep;

An' all us other childern, when the supper
things is done,

We set around the kitchen fire an' has the most-
est fun

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

A-list'nin' to the witch-tales 'at Annie tells
about,

An' the Gobble-uns 'at gits you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

Onc't they was a little boy wouldn't say his
prayers,—

So when he went to bed at night, away up
stairs,

His Mammy heerd him holler, an' his Daddy
heerd him bawl,

An' when they turn't the kivvers down, he
wasn't there at all!

An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an'
cubby-hole, an' press,

An' seeked him up the chimbley-flue, an' ever'-
wheres, I guess;

But all they ever found was thist his pants an'
roundabout:—

An' the Gobble-uns'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an'
grin,

An' make fun of ever'one, an' all her blood an'
kin;

An' onc't, when they was "company," an' ole
folks was there,

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

She mocked 'em an' shocked 'em, an' said she
didn't care!

An' thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to
run an' hide,

They was two great big Black Things a-standin'
by her side,

An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore
she knowed what she's about!

An' the Gobble-uns'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

An' little Orphant Annie says when the blaze is
blue,

An' the lamp-wick sputters, an' the wind goes
woo-oo!

An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is
gray,

An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched
away,—

You better mind yer parents, an' yer teachers
fond an' dear,

An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the
orphant's tear,

An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all
about,

Er the Gobble-uns'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY
THOUGHTS FER THE DISCOURAGED
FARMER

The summer winds is sniffin' round the bloom-
in' locus' trees;
And the clover in the pastur is a big day fer the
bees,
And they been a-swigin' honey, above board
and on the sly,
Tel they stutter in theyr buzzin' and stagger as
they fly.
The flicker on the fence-rail 'pears to jest spit
on his wings
And roll up his feathers, by the sassy way he
sings;
And the hoss-fly is a-whettin'-up his forelegs
fer biz,
And the off-mare is a-switchin' all of her tale
they is.

You can hear the blackbirds jawin' as they fol-
ler up the plow—
Oh, theyr bound to git theyr brekfast, and
theyr not a-carin' how;
So they quarrel in the furries, and they quarrel
on the wing—
But theyr peaceabler in pot-pies than any other
thing:
And it's when I git my shotgun drawed up in
stiddy rest,
She's as full of tribbellation as a yeller-jacket's
nest;

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

And a few shots before dinner, when the sun's
a-shinin' right,
Seems to kindo'-sorto' sharpen up a feller's ap-
petite!

They's been a heap o' rain, but the sun's out
to-day,
And the clouds of the wet spell is all cleared
away,
And the woods is all the greener, and the grass
is greener still;
It may rain again to-morry, but I don't think it
will.
Some says the crops is ruined, and the corn's
drownded out,
And prophasy the wheat will be a failure, with-
out doubt;
But the kind Providence that has never failed
us yet,
Will be on hands onc't more at the 'leventh
hour, I bet!

Does the medder-lark complane, as he swims
high and dry
Through the waves of the wind and the blue of
the sky?
Does the quail set up and whissel in a disap-
pinted way,
Er hang his head in silunce, and sorrow all the
day?
Is the chipmuck's health a-failin'?—Does he
walk, er does he run?

RESPONSE BY MR. RILEY

Don't the buzzards ooze around up thare jest
like they've allus done?

Is they anything the matter with the rooster's
lungs er voice?

Ort a mortul be complainin' when dumb ani-
mals rejoice?

Then let us, one and all, be contentud with our
lot;

The June is here this morning, and the sun is
shining hot.

Oh! let us fill our harts up with the glory of
the day,

And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow
fur away!

Whatever be our station, with Providence fer
guide,

Sich fine circumstances ort to make us satis-
fied;

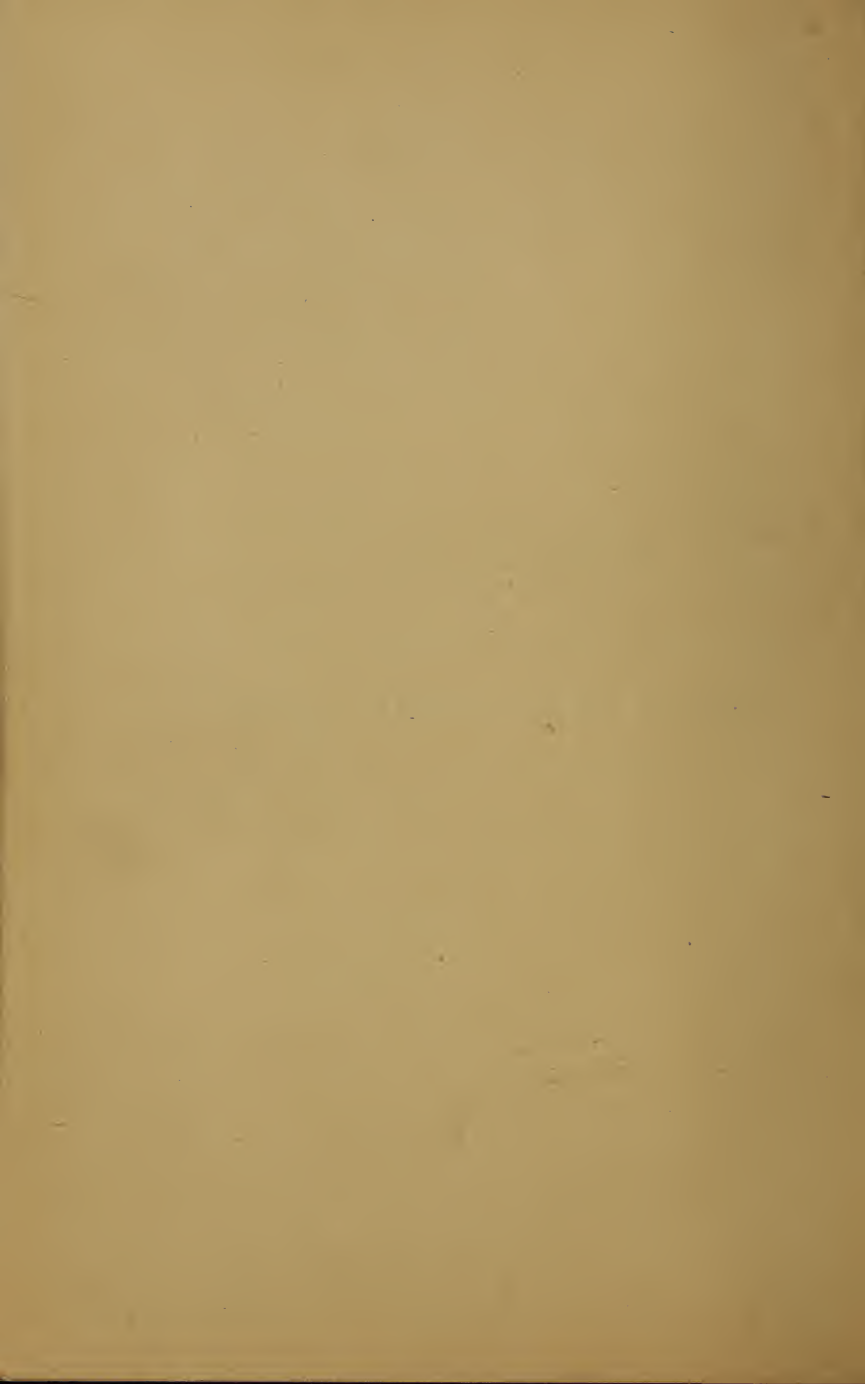
Fer the world is full of roses, and the roses
full of dew,

And the dew is full of heavenly love that drips
fer me and you.

A Sketch of the Life

of

James Whitcomb Riley



A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

It seems appropriate to the thousands of admirers of James Whitcomb Riley's poetry that he should have been born in a town of so poetic a name as Greenfield, which recalls one of his most familiar volumes, *Green Fields and Running Brooks*. Greenfield is a small town some score of miles from Indianapolis, and a good place for the boyhood home of a poet. James Whitcomb Riley was the second son of Reuben A. and Elizabeth Marine Riley. When he was fifteen years old he ceased to attend the public schools of his native town; and, finally obeying the wish of his father, who was an attorney in Greenfield, he began, like so many other American men of letters, to study law.

Law, however, did not prove an alluring master for a boy bubbling over with poetry, not as yet finding its way into rhyme and stanza, but calling him insistently to wood and field. One mid-summer afternoon, when the air was hot and sultry, the little town was

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF

awakened from its slumber by the advent of a patent-medicine and concert wagon. Blackstone was flung to the winds and young Riley found himself beating the bass drum for the patent-medicine men. With no farewells, the drum and Riley left Greenfield together. All through the summer months he traveled with the patent-medicine wagon, "seeing life" for the first time. When fall came he found that he was without means of getting home for the winter, but by the aid of a bucket and brush he managed to paint enough signs and picket fences along the homeward way to reach Greenfield once more.

His first literary venture appeared in a little country paper, which had but a brief existence and finally ended in bankruptcy. Through the influence of a friend, however, he was given the position of local editor on the *Democrat*, a paper published in the town of Anderson, Indiana, whither he had earlier chanced to wander on his summer's tour as a sign painter. He had always been regarded by his friends as bright and clever. Whatever demanded cleverness—whether sign-painting, story-telling or versifying—he did with a skill and effectiveness far beyond his

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

comrades, so when he went on the staff of the *Democrat* "he brought with his verses," as one writer says, "all the wit with which he had been accustomed to regale his little circle of friends, and the mock seriousness with which he took himself and his paper made it for a time a more welcome sheet in Anderson households than would have been a comic almanac." In time, however, his poems—to which the editor preferred local "items"—began to be thought quite lacking in usefulness for a country newspaper. When poems like the *Wrangdillion* began to appear:

"Dexery—tethery! down in the dike,
Under the—under the ooze and the slime,
Nestles the wraith of a reticent Gryke,
Blubbering bubbles of rhyme,"

the poet met with still more distrust.

An "esteemed contemporary" of the *Democrat* wished to know the meaning of lines like these, upon which the poet replied in his own paper that they were "a sort of poetic fungus that springs from the decay of better effort. After long labor at verse, you will find there comes a time when everything you see or hear, touch, taste or smell resolves itself into rhyme,

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and rattles away till you can't rest. I mean this literally. The people you meet upon the streets are so many disarranged rhymes, and only need proper coupling. The boulders in the sidewalk are jangled words. The crowd of corner loungers is a mangled sonnet with a few lines lacking; the farmer and his team an idyl of the road, perfected and complete when he stops at the picture of a grocery and hitches to an exclamation point. From this tireless something which

Beats time to nothing in my head
From some odd corner of the brain!

I walk, I run, I writhe and wrestle, but I can not shake it off. I lie down to sleep and all night long it haunts me. Whole cantos of incoherent rhymes dance before me, and, so vividly, at last I seem to read them as from a book. All this is without will power of my own to guide or check, and then occurs a stage of repetition—when the matter becomes rhythmically tangible at least, and shapes itself into a whole of sometimes a dozen stanzas and goes on repeating itself over and over and over till it is printed indelibly on my mind.

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"This stage heralds sleep at last, from which I wake refreshed and free from the toils of my persecutor; but some senseless piece of rhyme is printed on my mind and I go about repeating it as though I had committed it from the pages of some book. I often write these jingles afterward, though I believe I never could forget a word of them.

"This is the history of the *Craqueodoom*. This is the history of the poem I give below—*Wrangdillion*. I have theorized in vain. I went gravely to a doctor, on one occasion, and asked him seriously if he didn't think I was crazy. His laconic reply that he 'never saw a poet that wasn't' is not without its consolation."

As time went on, however, he compromised by putting into rhyme the praises of all the storekeepers of Anderson.

All this time, however, he was striving for better things. He sent poem after poem to the magazines only to have them returned. It was his name, he believed, that prevented him from making his work felt with the editors. "J. W. Riley," he held, was too great a handicap for any man. It was his conviction that if he could sign one of his poems with the

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name of some one famed in literature, its reception would be unquestioned. "This assertion, made and received half in jest, half in earnest, gave rise to a very significant episode in the life of the young poet." In an article in the *Bookman* Mrs. Louise Parks Richards, whose husband was closely associated with Riley during his life in Anderson, tells the story of this episode.

Riley and Richards and a few others were together a few days afterward in the law office of one of their friends. "Riley seemed nervous," Mrs. Richards tells the story, "when hesitatingly he took from his pocket a piece of paper saying: 'Last night I couldn't sleep and so I got out of bed and wrote this.' Impatient at Riley's trepidation, the lawyer took the paper from him and read aloud the lines of a poem entitled *Leonainie*, written in the style of Edgar Allan Poe.

"It was enthusiastically received and commented upon when Riley announced that this little poem was to be the test of his theory as to the value of a reputation. A plan of local campaigning was afterward decided upon, from which no end of amusement was to be realized, and which was to settle the oft-dis-

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puted question. As to any weighty consequences which might arise from this experiment, there was no thought.

"A young college graduate in a neighboring town had just started on the ambitious career of an editor of a county paper. His tastes, however, were rather those of a student than of a law-giver in local politics, and consequently he became deeply interested in the poetry of the *Anderson Democrat*, which he found among his exchanges. He copied these poems into his own paper, with most laudatory comment, although the author was to him unknown. He surmised, however, that these unsigned, but 'leaded' poems must be from some member of the *Democrat* office.

"Riley had been touched by this neighborly recognition, for at home his editor-in-chief had few words of encouragement, and in the fullness of his heart he had written to express his gratitude for the 'friendly hand extended out of the impenetrable.' His doubt of any wider appreciation than that near home, however, he made no attempt to conceal, for, 'of course,' he wrote, 'the scholastic critics will say that nothing good can come out of Indiana—that this is not the soil out of which

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poets grow—besides, the simple name “Riley” is enough in itself to wither any prospect.’ As a still further stumbling-block, he humorously enumerated, among other characteristics of his pen, that of writing ‘while’ when the purist demanded ‘whilst,’ and ‘among’ instead of ‘amongst,’ etc., etc.

“When *Leonainie* was written Riley naturally turned to his unseen admirer of the *Kokomo Dispatch*, explaining by letter the proposed joke, and asking his coöperation in launching his pinchbeck poem upon the public, it not being deemed prudent to publish it in the *Anderson Democrat*, lest its origin might be suspected. The *Kokomo* editor was delighted with the project, and promised most hearty assistance.

“As Riley afterward said, in looking about over the list of dead poets, he had selected Poe as a little in the hoaxing line himself, holding that perhaps he would not particularly care if some liberties were taken with his name. The fictitious account of the origin and discovery of *Leonainie*, which Riley himself had devised, had cost him more time and pains than the poem itself, yet this production was rejected as being too fanciful, and

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one of the Kokomo editor's own manufacture was substituted and published as follows, in the Kokomo *Dispatch* of August 2, 1877:

" 'POSTHUMOUS POETRY

" 'A Hitherto Unpublished Poem of the Lamented Edgar Allan Poe, written on the
Fly-Leaf of an Old Book Now
in Possession of a Gentle-
man in This City.

" 'The following beautiful posthumous poem from the gifted pen of the erratic poet, Edgar Allan Poe, we believe has never before been published in any form, either in any published collection of Poe's poems now extant, or in any magazine or newspaper of any description; and until the critics shall show conclusively to the contrary the *Dispatch* will claim the honor of giving it to the world.

" 'That the poem has never before been published, and that it is a genuine production of the poet whom we claim to be its author, we are satisfied from the circumstances under which it came into our possession, after a thorough investigation. Calling at the house of a gentleman of this city the other day on a business errand, our attention was called to

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a poem written on the blank fly-leaf of an old book. Handing up the book he observed that it (the poem) might be good enough to publish, and if we thought so, to take it along. Noticing the initials, E. A. P., at the bottom of the poem, it struck us that possibly we had run across a "bonanza," so to speak, and after reading it, we asked who its author was, when he related the following bit of interesting reminiscence:

"He said that he did not know who the author was, only that he was a young man, that is, he was a young man when he wrote the lines referred to. He had never seen him himself, but heard his grandfather, who gave him the book containing the verses, tell of the circumstance and occasion by which he (the grandfather) came into possession of the book. His grandparents kept a country hotel, a sort of wayside inn, in a small village called Chesterfield, near Richmond, Virginia. One night, just before bedtime, a young man, who showed plainly the marks of dissipation, rapped at the door and asked if he could stay all night, and was shown to a room. This was the last they saw of him. When they went to the room the next morning to call him to breakfast he had gone away and left the book, on the fly-leaf of which he had written the lines below.

"Further than this our informant knew nothing, and, being an uneducated, illiterate

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man, it was quite natural that he should allow the great literary treasure to go for so many years unpublished.

“That the above statement is true, and our discovery no canard, we will take pleasure in satisfying any one who cares to investigate the matter. The poem is written in Roman characters, and is almost as legible as print itself, although somewhat faded by the lapse of time. Another peculiarity in the manuscript, which we notice, is that it contains not the least sign of erasure, or a single interlineated word. We give the poem verbatim—just as it appears in the original. Here it is:

“Leonainie—Angels named her;
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars and framed her
In a smile of white;
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the solemn night.—

In a solemn night of summer,
When my heart of gloom
Blossomed up to greet the comer
Like a rose in bloom;
All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot, as joy caressed me—
(*Lying* joy! that caught and pressed me
In the arms of doom!)

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Only spake the little lisper
In the Angel-tongue;
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper—
“Songs are only sung
Here below that they may grieve you—
Tales but told you to deceive you,—
So must Leonainie leave you
While her love is young.”

Then God smiled and it was morning,
Matchless and supreme;
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with its esteem;
Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer, and lifted
Where my Leonainie drifted
From me like a dream.

E. A. P.'

“To be able to furnish the proof of Poe's authorship in the event of a possible investigation, it was deemed necessary to counterfeit Poe's handwriting. Lithographic facsimiles of a few lines of that author's original manuscripts having been obtained, Richards, the partner in the coalition, who was an expert with the pen, had gone to work diligently, practising with pale ink on the blank pages of old yellowed books, to imitate the chirography of Edgar Allan Poe.

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“Richards’ interest and enthusiasm rivaled Riley’s own, and every day his experiments grew more and more like the original. At last the transcript was pronounced beyond detection, the same accuracy in punctuation, the same carefulness in copy, which marked Poe’s own manuscripts, having been skilfully imitated. It was then copied on one of the blank leaves of an old Ainsworth’s *Latin-English Dictionary*, from the lawyer friend’s library, and forwarded to the Kokomo editor, who contributed further to the plot by coaching an old man in his town in the rôle of the possessor of the book and of the grandson of the mythical tavern-keeper in Virginia.

“The rival of the *Democrat*, the *Anderson Herald*, in copying *Leonainie* from the *Kokomo Dispatch* the next week after its appearance, delivered itself of the following:

“We expect a rhapsody of jealous censure from the jingling editor of the sheet across the way, and shall wait, with the first anxiety ever experienced, for the appearance of the *Democrat*. We look for an exhausting and damning criticism from Riley, who will doubtless fail to see *Leonainie’s* apocryphal merit, and discover its obvious faults. As it was, we are led to believe *Leonainie*, to quote from

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Riley, is a "superior quality of the poetic fungus, which springs from the decay of better thoughts."

"Sure enough, the poet of the *Democrat* did come out with a long article upon the literary discovery announced in the *Kokomo Dispatch*, from which, as he wrote, 'the following extract from a lush and juicy article occurs.' Reproducing the poem and its strange story, he proceeded with the predicted 'jealous censure':

" 'We frankly admit that, upon first reading of the article, we inwardly resolved to ignore it entirely. Passing the many assailable points of the story regarding the birth and late discovery of the poem, we shall briefly consider first—Is Poe the author of it?

" 'That a poem contains some literary excellence is no assurance that its author is a genius known to fame, for how many waifs of richest worth are now afloat upon the literary sea, whose authors are unknown, and whose nameless names have never marked the graves that hide their hidden value from the world; and in the present instance we have no right to say: "This is Poe's work—for who but Poe could mold a name like *Leonainie*?" and all that sort of flighty flummery. Let us look deeper down, and pierce below the glare

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and gurgle of the surface and analyze it at its real worth.

“Now we are ready to consider—Is the theme of the poem one that Poe would have been likely to select? We think not: for we have good authority showing that Poe had a positive aversion to children, and especially babies; and then, again, the thought embodied in the very opening line is not new—or at least the poet has before expressed it where he speaks of that “rare and radiant maiden, whom the *angels* name Lenore,” and a careful analysis of the remainder of the stanza fails to discover a single quality above mere change of form or transposition.

“The second stanza will be a more difficult matter to contest, for we find in it throughout not only Poe’s peculiar bent of thought, but new features of that weird faculty of attractively combining with the delicate and beautiful, the dread and repulsive—a power most rarely manifest, and quite beyond the bounds of imitation. In fact the only flaw we find at which to pick is the strange omission of capitals beginning the personified words, “joy” and “doom.” This, however, may be an error of the compositor’s, but not probably.

“The third stanza drops again. True, it gives us some new thoughts, but of very secondary worth compared with the foregoing, and in such commonplace diction the Poe characteristic is almost lost.

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“The first line of the concluding stanza, although embodying a highly poetical idea, is not at all like Poe; but rather unlike, and for such weighty reasons we are assured that the thought could not have emanated from him. It is a fact less known than remarkable that Poe avoided the name of the Deity. Although he never tires of angels and the heavenly cherubim, the word God seems strangely ostracized. That this is true, one has but to search his poems; and we think we are safe in the assertion that in all that he has ever written the word God is not mentioned twenty times. In further evidence of this peculiar aversion of the poet, we quote his utterance:

“Oh, Heaven: Oh, God:
How my heart beats in coupling these words!”

“The remainder of the concluding stanza is mediocre till the few lines that complete it—and there again the Poe element is strongly marked. To sum the poem as a whole we are at some loss. It most certainly contains rare attributes of grace and beauty; and although we have not the temerity to accuse the gifted poet of its authorship, for equal strength of reason we can not deny that it is his production; but as for the enthusiastic editor of the *Dispatch*, we are not inclined, as yet, to the belief that he is wholly impervious to the wiles of deception.’

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"In its next issue the *Herald* man congratulated himself on his fulfilled prophecy. 'True to our prognostication of last week,' he said, 'J. W. Riley, editor of the *Democrat*, slashes into *Leonainie* in a jealous manner.' The poet's criticism and skepticism were further commented upon in a column article.

"*Leonainie*, with lengthy dissertations, was widely copied. From newspapers the story of the 'literary find' spread into more critical quarters. Article after article, in proof of the genuineness of Poe's *Leonainie*, appeared over the names of known critics. The presumptuous youth of a weekly newspaper, who sought to disclaim or cast a doubt on that which men of judgment accepted as genuine, was himself engulfed, while his poem continued to go the rounds of appreciative notice.

"A Boston publishing house, which had a *Life of Poe* in preparation, now wrote to the *Dispatch* asking for the original manuscript of *Leonainie*. It seemed that the most sanguine expectations of the merry plotters were to be more than realized. Then it began to dawn upon them that jokes sometimes have unpleasant consequences; that this joke in particular had assumed such huge proportions

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that it had become a risk to carry longer. The possibilities of two versions of a joke for the first time suggested themselves, but with the battery handles tight in the grasp of the perpetrators, it was difficult to let go.

"Riley himself, appalled at the success of his literary fraud, repeatedly wrote to the Kokomo editor to turn off the current, to put an end to it all before it became too serious, by an explanation to the public, but the editor, Mr. Henderson, was enjoying it too well, and insisted that the time had not yet come for the dénouement. It was finally decided that prudence, at least, forbade sending the manuscript to the publishers in Boston, and so its delivery was refused.

"At last the senior editor of the Anderson *Herald*, learning the true story of *Leonainie's* authorship, generously communicated information of the facts to the Kokomo *Tribune*, the rival of the *Dispatch*, the exposure of whose hoax and the author presented opportunities to 'even up' some old scores of journalistic jealousies.

"Through the boastful communication of a young son of the *Tribune* editor, that 'his father was going to print something about the

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Dispatch's big stories, Mr. Henderson had timely warning, and in his next issue, anticipating the rival exposure, pricked his own bubble, disclosing the true authorship of *Leonainie*.

"To say that Riley won his wager would be only half the truth, for his joke on the literary world exceeded his wildest expectations; but for him it had so far lost its zest that he could not bear to have allusion made to it years after he had been wholly fledged from local editor to poet."

Leonainie was widely copied as a genuine Poe poem, deceiving even well-known critics. Even after Mr. Riley's name was disclosed as that of the real author, they refused to be convinced. The poem now appears in the volume entitled *Armazindy*, and has also been included in *Love-Lyrics*.

In 1883 Mr. Riley's first volume of poems appeared, entitled *The Old Swimmin'-Hole and 'Leven More Poems*. The volumes appeared under the pseudonym of Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone, but it very quickly became known that the author was James Whitcomb Riley.

In the preface to *Neghborly Poems*, pub-

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lished in 1891, and made up of the poems that originally appeared in *The Old Swimm'-Hole* and many others, Mr. Riley himself tells how these first poems got into print.

"As far back into boyhood as the writer's memory may intelligently go," he says, "the 'country poet' is most pleasantly recalled. He was, and is, as common as the 'country fiddler,' and as full of good, old-fashioned music. Not a master of melody, indeed, but a poet, certainly—

'Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.'

"And it is simply the purpose of this series of dialectic studies to reflect the real worth of this homely child of nature, and to echo faithfully, if possible, the faltering music of his song.

"In adding to this series, as the writer has for many years been urged to do, and answering as steadfast a demand of Benj. F. Johnson's first and oldest friends, it has been decided that this further work of his be introduced to the reader of the volume as was the

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old man's first work to the reader of the newspaper of nearly ten years ago.

"Directly, then, referring to the Indianapolis *Daily Journal*,—under whose management the writer had for some time been employed,—from issue of date June 17, 1882, under editorial caption of *A Boone County Pastoral*, this article is herewith quoted:

" 'Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone County, who considers the *Journal* a "very valubul" newspaper, writes to inclose us an original poem, desiring that we kindly accept it for publication, as "many neighbors and friends is astin' him to have the same struck off."

" 'Mr. Johnson thoughtfully informs us that he is "no edjucated man," but that he has, "from childhood up tel old enough to vote, allus wrote more er less poetry, as many of an alburn in the neighborhood can testify." Again, he says that he writes "from the hart out"; and there is a touch of genuine pathos in the frank avowal, "Thare is times when I write the tears rolls down my cheeks."

" 'In all sincerity, Mr. Johnson, we are glad to publish the poem you send, and just as you have written it. That is its greatest charm. Its very defects compose its excellence. You need no better education than the one from which emanates *The Old Swimmin'-Hole*. It is real poetry, and all the more tender and

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lovable for the unquestionable evidence it bears of having been written "from the hart out." The only thing we find to—but hold! Let us first lay the poem before the reader.'

"Here followed the poem, *The Old Swimm'-Hole*, entire—the editorial comment ending as follows:

" 'The only thing now, Mr. Johnson—as we were about to observe—the only thing we find to criticize, at all relative to the poem, is your closing statement to the effect that "It was wrote to go to the tune of *The Captin With His Whiskers!*" You should not have told us that, O Rare Ben Johnson!'

"A week later, in the *Journal* of date June 24th, followed this additional mention of 'Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone':

" 'It is a pleasure for us to note that the publication of the poem of *The Old Swimm'-Hole*, to which the *Journal*, with just pride, referred last week, has proved almost as great a pleasure to its author as to the hosts of delighted readers, who have written in its praise, or called personally to indorse our high opinion of its poetic value. We have just received a letter from Mr. Johnson, the author, inclosing us another lyrical performance, which in many features even surpasses

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the originality and spirit of the former effort. Certainly the least that can be said of it is that it stands a thorough proof of our first assertion, that the author, though by no means a man of learning and profound literary attainments, is none the less a true poet and an artist. The letter, accompanying this later amaranth of blooming wildwood verse, we publish in its entirety, assured that Mr. Johnson's many admirers will be charmed, as we have been, at the delicious glimpse he gives us of his inspiration, modes of study, home life and surroundings:

“To the Editer of the *Indanoplus Jurnal*:

“Respected Sir—The paper is here, markin' the old swimmin'-hole, my poetry which you seem to like so well. I joy to see it in print, and I thank you, hart and voice, fer speakin' of its merrits in the way in which you do. I am glad you thought it was real poetry, as you said in your artikle. But I make bold to ast you what was your idy in sayin' I had ortent of told you it went to the tune I spoke of in my last. I felt highly flatered tel I got that fur. Was it because you don't know the tune refered to in the letter? Er wasent some words spelt right er not? Still ef you hadent of said somepin' against it Ide of thought you was makin' fun. As I said before I well know my own unedjucation, but I don't think that is any reason the feelin's of the soul is stunted in theyr growth however.

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"Juge not less ye be juged," says The Good Book, and so say I, ef I thought you was makin' fun of the lines that I wrote and which you done me the onner to have printed off in sich fine style that I have read it over and over again in the paper you sent, and I would like to have about three more ef you can spare the same and state by mail what they will come at. All nature was in tune day before yisterday when your paper come to hand. It had ben a-raining hard fer some days, but the morning opened up as clear as a whissel. No clouds was in the sky, and the air was bammy with the warm sunshine and the wet smell of the earth and the locus blossoms and the flowrs and pennyroil and bone-set. I got up, the first one about the place, and went forth to the pleasant fields. I fed the stock with lavish hand and worterred them in merry glee, they was no bird in all the land no happier than me. I have jest wrote a verse of poetry in this letter; see ef you can find it. I also send you a whole poem which was wrote off the very day your paper come. I started it in the morning I have so feebly tride to pictur' to you and wound her up by suppertime, besides doin' a fare day's work around the place.

"Ef you print this one I think you will like it better than the other. This ain't a sad poem like the other was, but you will find it full of careful thought. I pride myself on

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that. I also send you 30 cents in stamps fer you to take your pay out of fer the other papers I said, and also fer three more with this in it ef you have it printed and oblige. Ef you don't print this poem, keep the stamps and send me three more papers with *the other one* in—makin' the sum totul of six (6) papers altogether in full. Ever your true friend,

BENJ. F. JOHNSON.

" 'N. B.—The tune of this one is *The Bold Privateer*.' "

"Here followed the poem, *Thoughts fer the Discouraged Farmer*; and here, too, fittingly ends any comment but that which would appear trivial and gratuitous.

"Simply, in briefest conclusion, the hale sound, artless, lovable character of Benj. F. Johnson remains, in the writer's mind, as from the first, far less a fiction than a living, breathing, vigorous reality. So strong, indeed, has his personality been made manifest, that many times, in visionary argument with the sturdy old myth over certain changes from the original forms of his productions, he has so incontinently beaten down all suggestions as to a less incongruous association of thoughts and words, together with protests against his many violations of poetic method,

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harmony and grace, that nothing was left the writer but to submit to what has always seemed—and in truth still seems—a superior wisdom of dictation.”

In 1887 appeared *Afterwhiles*, a collection of some of the best of the poet's maturing work. In 1888 *Pipes O' Pan at Zekesbury* was published. The next year a selection from Mr. Riley's poems was published in England under the title of *Old-Fashioned Roses*. In 1890 *Rhymes of Childhood* appeared, and since that time hardly a year has gone by without some volume by James Whitcomb Riley coming forth to gladden the hearts of his well-beloved fellow men. *Sketches in Prose with Interluding Verses* was published in 1891, in the same year with *Neghborly Poems*, to which reference has just been made. In 1892 *Green Fields and Running Brooks* came out, followed in 1893 by *Poems Here at Home*, in 1894 by *Armazindy*, in 1896 by *A Child-World*, that poem so full of reminiscence of the poet's own childhood, in 1897 by *The Rubáiyát of Doc Sifers*, in 1898 by *Child-Rhymes*, in 1899 by *Love-Lyrics*, and in England a volume of selections entitled *The Golden Year*, in 1900 by

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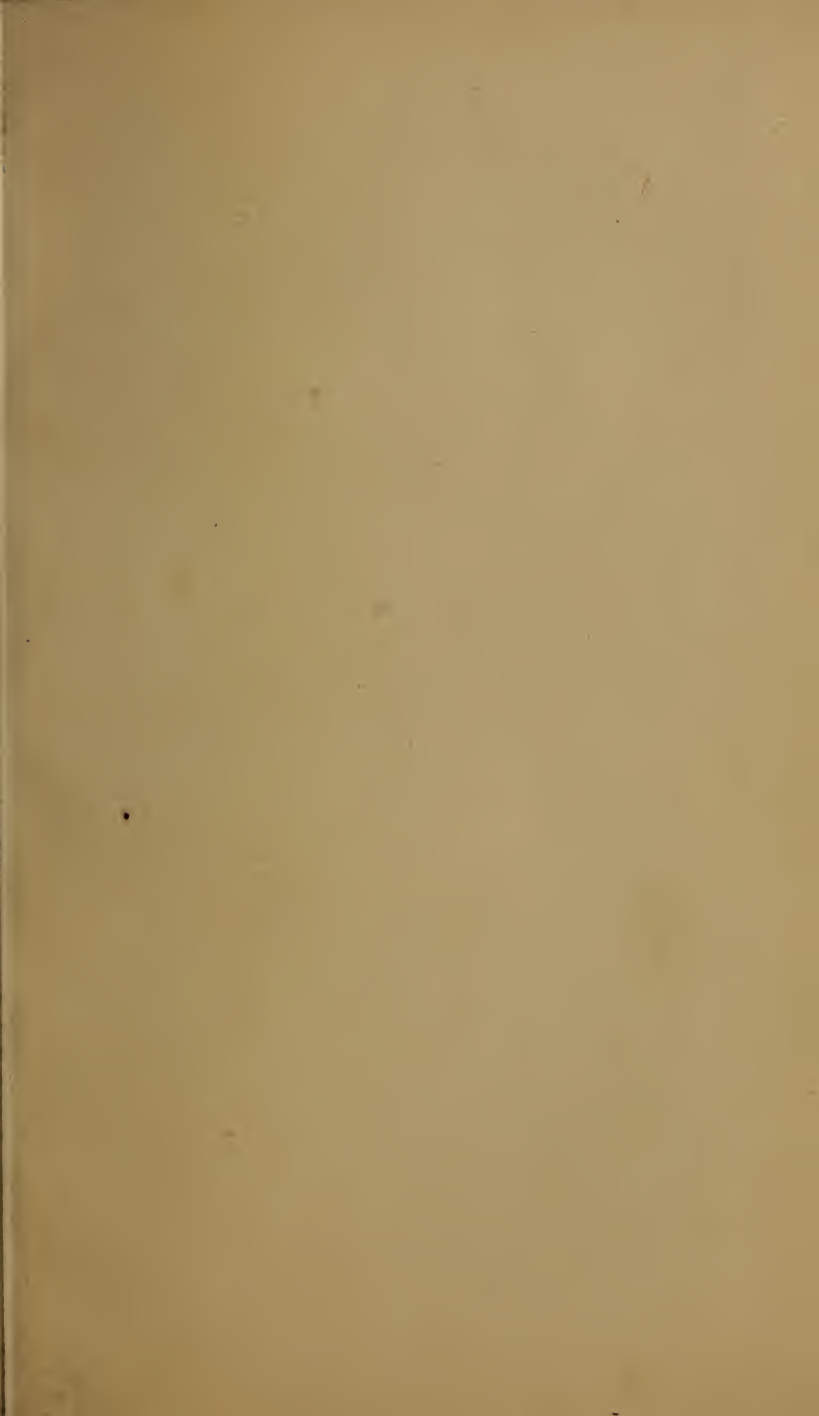
Home-Folks, in 1901 by *Farm-Rhymes*, in 1902 by *The Book of Joyous Children* and *An Old Sweetheart of Mine*, in 1903 by *His Pa's Romance*, in 1904 by *Out to Old Aunt Mary's* and that delightful humorous poem of Christmas time, *A Defective Santa Claus*, and in 1905 by *Songs O' Cheer*.

In 1902 Mr. Riley received the degree of Master of Arts from Yale, and two years later that of Doctor of Letters from the University of Pennsylvania. He has never married, but makes his home with old friends, in a plain substantial brick house on the far-famed Lockerbie Street in Indianapolis. His library is a most complete treasure-house of his warm personal literary friendships.

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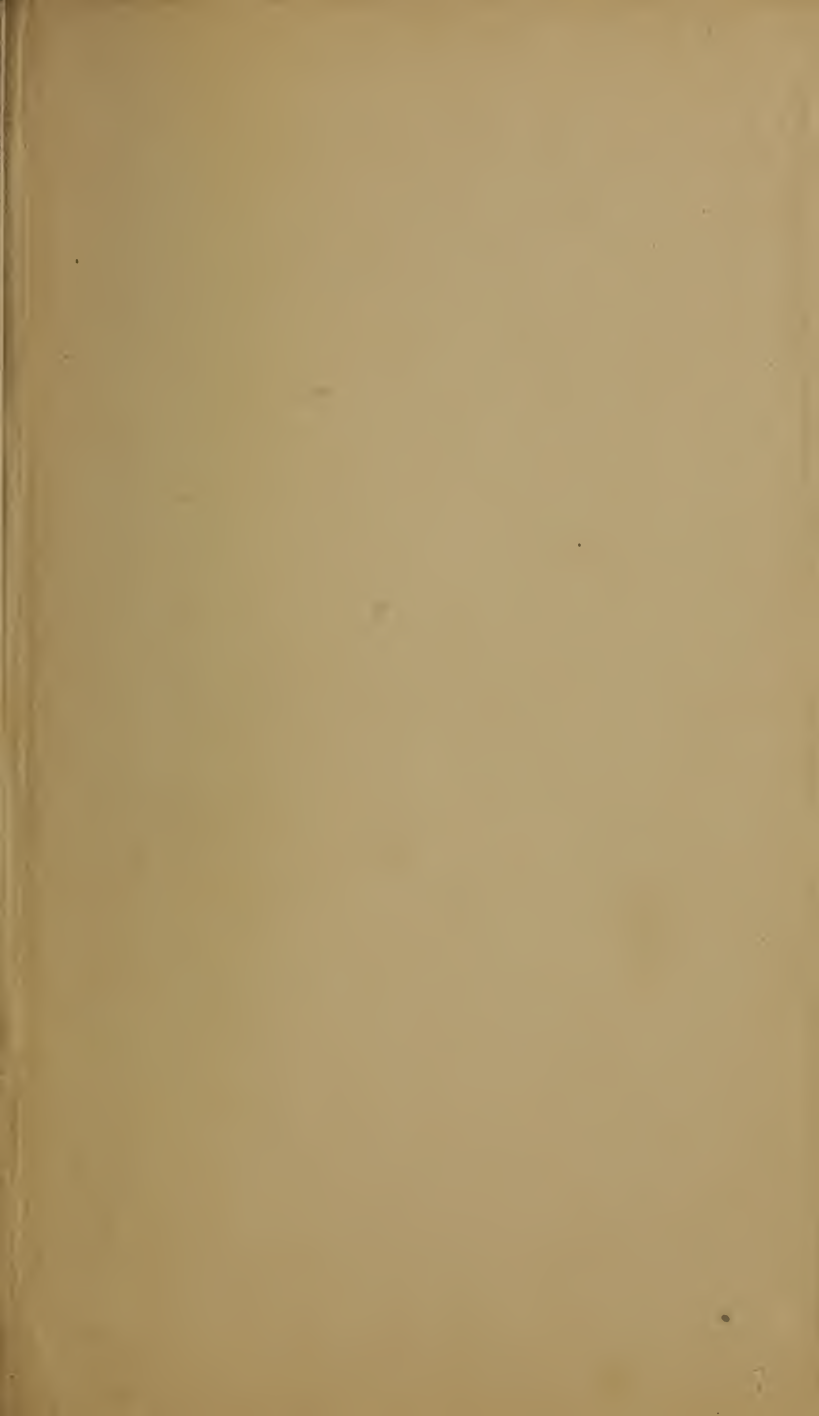


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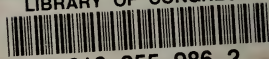
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